

Specific Learning Disabilities

1. Definition (State Board of Education Rule 0520-1-9-.01)
 - a. "Specific Learning Disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.
 - b. Disorders not included. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
2. Eligibility Standards
 - a. In order to identify and be determined as eligible for Special Education Services as a child with a specific learning disability, the IEP Team shall document that the following standards have been met.
 - (1) The child shall demonstrate a continued lack of progress when provided with appropriate instruction in the suspected area of disability. There shall be documented evidence which indicates that effective general education interventions and strategies have been attempted over a reasonable period of time.
 - (2) The determining factor for identification of a learning disability may not be a "lack of appropriate instruction in reading and math."
 - (3) There shall be evidence that the child does not achieve commensurate with his/her age and ability in one or more of the following areas: listening comprehension, oral expression, basic reading skills, reading comprehension, written expression, mathematics calculation, and/or mathematics reasoning.
 - (4) There is a severe discrepancy between educational performance and predicted achievement that is based on the best measure of cognitive ability. A severe discrepancy between educational performance and predicted achievement that is based on the best measure of cognitive ability is defined by at least 1.5 Standard Error of the Estimate Units (SEe's) when utilizing regression-based discrepancy analyses described in Tennessee's guidelines for evaluation of specific learning disabilities. [See Attachment]
 - (5) There is evidence of a cognitive processing disorder that adversely affects the child's academic achievement. A cognitive processing disorder is defined as a deficit in the manner in which a child receives, stores, transforms, retrieves, and expresses information. There shall be documented evidence that demonstrates or expresses the manifestation of the processing disorder in the identified achievement deficit.
 - (6) There shall be evidence that the child's learning problems are not due primarily to visual, hearing, or motor impairments; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage; limited English proficiency, motivational factors; or situational traumas.

- (7) There shall be evidence that:
 - (a) characteristics as defined above are present and that the severity of the child's specific learning disability adversely affects his/her progress in the general education curriculum, demonstrating the need for special education and related services, and
 - (b) children who perform in classroom academics in a manner commensurate with expected academic standards at the child's grade level cannot be considered as having a specific learning disability, even though they may show deficits on achievement tests in one or more of the seven academic areas.

3. Evaluation Procedures

- a. Evaluation shall include all of the following:
 - (1) an individual standardized multifactorial assessment of cognitive ability;
 - (2) an individual standardized assessment of academic achievement;
 - (3) supportive data in the identified deficit academic area(s) from sources such as group or individually administered achievement tests; criterion-referenced assessments, or curriculum/performance-based assessments;
 - (4) at least two valid and reliable measures in the area of the suspected cognitive processing disorder [may be derived from many of the assessments described in 3 a. – (1),(2),(3)];
 - (5) at least two documented observations of the child's educational performance in the general education classroom including:
 - (a) an indirect observation by the child's general education classroom teacher, and
 - (b) a direct observation by a professional other than the person providing the indirect observation.
 - (c) Observations shall address the child's academic behaviors, academic performance, and relevant work samples;
 - (6) parental input and, as appropriate, the child's input;
 - (7) documentation that the child's learning problems are not primarily due to:
 - (a) lack of appropriate instruction in reading and math
 - (b) limited English proficiency;
 - (c) visual, hearing, or motor impairment,
 - (d) mental retardation,
 - (e) emotional disturbance,
 - (f) environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage,
 - (g) motivational factors, and
 - (h) situational traumas.
 - (8) documentation and assessment of how the child's specific learning disability adversely affects his/her progress in the general education curriculum.

4. Evaluation Participants

- a. Information shall be gathered from the following persons in the evaluation of a specific learning disability:
 - (1) the child;
 - (2) the parent(s) or guardian of the child;
 - (3) the child's general education classroom teacher;
 - (4) an appropriately licensed school psychologist, licensed psychological examiner, or licensed psychologist, and
 - (5) other professional personnel as indicated.